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ENGLISH ERIC AND THE COLLEGE TEACHING OF ENGLISH. A REPORT OF THREE CONFERENCES ON ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH SPONSORED BY THE MLA ENGLISH ERIC AND HELD IN CONNECTION WITH THE 1967 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION (CHICAGO, 27-29 DECEMBER 1967).

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NEARLY 100 SCHOLARS AND TEACHERS GATHERED IN THREE SPECIAL CONFERENCES ON THE COLLECTION AND DISSEMINATION OF RESEARCH IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND ATTEMPTED TO IDENTIFY AREAS OF SPECIAL IMPORTANCE IN THE JUNIOR AND COMMUNITY COLLEGE ENGLISH PROGRAM, THE UNDERGRADUATE CURRICULUM, AND GRADUATE PROGRAMS IN ENGLISH. A PAPER PRESENTED BY MICHAEL SHUGRUE EXPLAINS THE PURPOSE OF THE ENGLISH EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER. A ROSTER OF THOSE ATTENDING, THE AGENDA DETAILING DISCUSSION TOPICS, AND OUTLINES IDENTIFIED BY THE PARTICIPANTS AS AREAS FOR RESEARCH AND THE COLLECTION OF INFORMATION ARE INCLUDED. (BN)

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MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION
OF AMERICA

ENGLISH ERIC AND THE COLLEGE TEACHING OF ENGLISH: A REPORT OF THREE CONFERENCES ON ISSUES IN THE TEACHING OF ENGLISH SPONSORED BY THE MLA ENGLISH ERIC AND HELD IN CONNECTION WITH THE 1967 ANNUAL MEETING OF THE MODERN LANGUAGE ASSOCIATION, 27-29 DECEMBER 1967.

JANUARY 1968

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION & WELFARE
OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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I. Introduction

Nearly 100 scholars and teachers gathered in three special conferences on the collection and dissemination of research in the teaching of English in higher education during the annual meeting of the MLA in Chicago, 27-29 December 1967. Sponsored by the MLA English ERIC, the conferences attempted to iedntify areas of special importance in the junior and community college English program, the undergraduate curriculum, and graduate programs in English.

II. 27 December: ERIC and the Undergraduate Curriculum

A. Twenty-four persons took part in the meeting:

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B. The following agenda guided the discussions:

Albert Kitzhaber presiding

1. The Possibilities of English ERIC: Michael F. Shugrue

2. Topics for Discussion:

   a. Teaching Loads

   b. The Supply and Demands for Faculty

   c. Introductory courses:

      1. Changing nature of Freshman English.
      2. The introductory literature courses: genre, survey, great books.

   d. The Major:

      1. Linguistics in the English major's program.
      2. Advanced composition in the English major's program.

   e. Teacher Preparation:

      1. Special courses for elementary and secondary teachers.
      2. The Department's role in supervision of practice teaching.

C. Mr. Shugrue explained the purpose of the meeting:

For the seventeenth century scholar, "a complete and generous education," was, in Milton's words, "that which fits a man to perform justly, skillfully, and magnanimously all offices, both private and public, of peace and war." Milton, alas, could not foresee the twentieth century's surfeit of knowledge. His prescription for being "dear to God and famous to all ages" today gives way to the frustrating, often futile, efforts to keep abreast of current information in the most limited fields. Even a selected bibliography such as the MLA International Bibliography, which includes many languages and literatures, contained 20,814 entries in 1967. Knowing what material exists and how to get it is a growing problem for the scholar, teacher, and administrator of an English department .

The truth of Disraeli's assertion that "the more extensive a man's knowledge of what has been done, the greater will be his power of knowing what to do" demands that the humanist know and use the tools which present-day technology provides for handling masses of material. Rapid methods of research collection and dissemination exist for the physicist and chemist. For the scholar and teacher interested in English in higher education, the formation of the Educational Resources Information Center (ERIC) is a welcome approach to the critical information problem in American education. ERIC can aid the administrator, teacher, and scholar who needs access to the growing number of pedagogical articles in journals and to the flood of books from university and other presses. Funded by the USOE, ERIC is a decentralized, nation-wide network of specialized information centers or clearinghouses designed to bring significant current research and research-related information on education to those who need it. Although the MLA English/ERIC is coordinated through Central ERIC in Washington, D.C., the collection of materials for English in higher education is directed by subject-matter specialists who search for, evaluate, index, and abstract materials in this area.

Because of the scope and complexity of the field of English, three Clearinghouses serve the field: That at the NCTE is responsible for research reports and other documents relevant to all aspects of the teaching of English from kindergarten through grade 12, the preparation of teachers of English for the schools, and the preparation of specialists in English education and the teaching of English; that at the Center for Applied Linguistics is responsible for research reports and other documents dealing with English for speakers of other languages, the teaching of standard English to speakers of nonstandard English, and applied linguistics. The MLA English ERIC, a part of a larger MLA ERIC on English and the Modern Foreign Languages, is responsible for research reports and other documents about undergraduate and graduate programs in English, including programs in introductory composition, general education, the major, and the preparation of teachers of English for two- and four-year colleges and universities.

If the MLA ERIC merely feeds into its own files and into a national information retrieval system material of no consequence and research of questionable validity, the system can, indeed, become a national trashbin of useless information. But its possibilities are far greater. If ERIC can make the profession aware that there is a national repository for information about English in higher education which can provide background materials for curriculum committees, useful bibliographies of issues of current concern, and research reports on key issues in pedagogy, it will have taken the first step. If it can demonstrate to the profession that it can obtain and supply to departments and to individual teachers hard-to-get-at reports and statistics on enrollments, the supply and demand for faculty, faculty salaries, and curriculum innovations, it will provide a real service to the field of English. If college teachers of English become accustomed to feeding into ERIC new programs for the major and for graduates which they have developed, departmental surveys on outstanding library resources available in individual institutions, and research on English in higher education, including articulation between the junior and community colleges and the four-year institutions, it will grow constantly more useful.

Because our ERIC resources--time, staff, and money--are limited, we must make choices about key issues which need the attention of our profession. We have asked you to come together today to help English ERIC isolate a few issues so important to the college curriculum that English ERIC must concentrate on finding whatever information and research is available, distilling that body of knowledge, and channelling it to the profession. The efforts of ERIC will also, we hope, generate research into these areas.

D. The participants identified eight principal concerns:

1. What is the nature of freshman English?
    a. What new and innovative programs are now in operation?
    b. What research on the effectiveness of teaching writing can be uncovered?
    c. What place does programmed instruction have in freshman English courses?
        Are SRA programs, for example, effective?
        Why are relatively few programmed materials now being used?

2. What is the nature of the sophomore course?
    a. What kinds of courses are currently being widely offered?
        Are statistics available on the prevalence of courses arranged by genre, by literary masterpieces, by literary history?
    b. What is the rationale for outstanding programs at such places as Dartmouth?
    c. Have innovative programs been designed for students of varying abilities?

3. Do programs on new urban campuses reflect an awareness of community problems and interests?

4. How are outstanding departments resolving problems of staffing, especially for the freshman course?

5. Have some departments developed a curriculum quite different from the traditional arrangement of freshman English, the sophomore course, period courses, etc.?
   a. What can a department reasonably expect of a major?
   b. Which courses among the increasing number of contemporary literature and linguistics courses should a college with limited faculty and resources attempt to offer.

6. What should be the nature of the linguistics program for the major?
   a. Are small departments trying to offer too many courses?
   b. What is the typical requirement in a department with a strong linguistics program?
   c. What is the typical content of a good one-semester course? a two-semester course?

7. What is the nature of the English honors program?

8. How can greater articulation among college faculty members and between college teachers of English and classroom teachers be achieved?
   a. What outstanding articulation programs are now in existence?
   b. Do secondary school teachers model their English programs too closely on college offerings?
   c. How can college departments place responsibility in the high schools for certain kinds of training?

9. What is the effect of testing in English?
   a. How widespread and how effective is Advanced Placement?
   b. Are many teachers teaching what they believe their students should be able to learn rather than what is appropriate for the students' age and ability?

E. The participants petitioned the MLA for a conference at the 1968 annual meeting on one of the above topics.

III. 28 December: ERIC AND THE GRADUATE CURRICULUM

A. Forty-five persons took part in the meeting:

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B. The following agenda guided the discussion:

1. Opening Remarks: Fredson T. Bowers, University of Virginia

2. ERIC Comments: Michael F. Shugrue, Secretary for English, MLA

3. Informal Colloquium: The Ph. D. in English

(Initial Statements Concerning the Ph.D. in English: Patrick G. Hogan, Jr.
University of Houston)

a. Results of checklist
   1. Topics of major interest
   2. Distribution of topic interest

b. Brief Statements on Topics of Major Interest
   1. Should the training of Ph. D. candidates in college level teaching be an integral part of the degree program? If so, what are the best ways of providing such training?
   (Statement by Professor Griffith Pugh)
   2. What are genuine and reasonable alternatives to a "significant contribution to knowledge" in considering a dissertation project?
   (Statement by Professor R. P. Davis)
   3. How can the general (and genuine) breadth of a Ph. D. candidate be strengthened in a streamlined program?
   (Statement by Professor Henry Sams)
   4. Is there a tendency to permit excessive specialization perhaps to a degree that will penalize the potential scholar-teacher as a teacher, particularly since the Ph. D. degree has become an "unofficial union card of tutorial effectiveness"?
   (Statement by Professor Joseph Bryant)
   5. What is the makeup of a department's graduate committee? What should be the obligations of such a committee? How much authority should it have?
   (Statement by Professor Patrick Hogan)
   6. If mastery of one foreign language is to be considered an adequate substitute for a reading knowledge of two foreign languages, how is this mastery to be measured or evaluated? (Statement by Professor Jerome Archer)

c. Open Discussion of Related Topics: Moderator, Fredson T. Bowers
University of Virginia

4. Discussion of Group Interest in Future Continuity (Hogan)

   a. Petition for Conference or Session at 1968 MLA meeting.
   b. Use of MLA as clearinghouse for information.
   c. Question of the kinds of information departments want.
   d. Determination of priority topics for gathering information.

5. Adjournment: Closing Remarks: Bowers and/or Shugrue

C. The participants asked for information on the dissertation, the authority of the director of graduate studies, the number and kind of new graduate programs in English, and the rationale behind current programs.

1. What is currently acceptable for a dissertation?

   a. Which institutions accept related articles?
      How are these essays organized?
      Must they be publishable?
   b. How widely is a creative dissertation (novel, drama, etc.) accepted?

2. How can new programs balance depth and breadth in the field in the program for the Ph.D.?

3. How can the Ph.D. be streamlined?

D. The participants petitioned the MLA for a conference at the 1968 Annual Meeting.

IV. 29 DECEMBER: ERIC AND THE JUNIOR COLLEGE

A. 38 persons took part in the meeting:

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B. The following agenda guided the discussions:

John C. Gerber, Presiding

1. The English Teacher in the Junior and Community College:

   a. Should there be special teacher preparation programs for the junior and community college teacher? If so, how should they differ from existing graduate programs?

   b. How can a directory of information about graduate programs for junior college teachers be established and made widely available?

   c. How does unionization affect the junior college teacher of English?

   c. What kinds of research should the junior college teacher of English undertake?

2. The Junior College and the Modern Language Association:

   a. Should there be regular junior college conferences at the national and regional MLA's?

   b. Should the MLA and the NCTE work toward a national junior college conference on "Basic Issues in the Junior College"?

3. The English Curriculum in the Junior College:

   a. What are the implications of testing and grouping for the junior college English class?

   b. What should be the nature of the English curriculum for the non-transfer student?

      a. What patterns other than by genre can be used to organize literature courses for non-transfer students?
      b. What is the nature of remedial work in English at the junior college level?

   c. Are transfer students in the junior college different from students who enter four-year institutions? If so, in what ways?

   d. What should writing courses in the junior college be like?

      1. How much writing should be done in various kinds of junior college English classes?
      2. What place should personal, creative, expressive writing have (as opposed to expository writing)?
      3. Are there ways other than the research paper to help students learn to gather, sort, and evaluate information? Do research papers have relevance to the practical needs of non-transfer students in the junior college?

C. The participants identified six areas for research and the collection of information:

1. How should junior and community college teachers be prepared?

   a. Does the task of the junior college teacher differ from that of other college teachers?

b. What current programs exist for the preparation of junior college teachers?
c. What should be the rationale for a junior college teacher preparation program?
d. The following points should be emphasized in any discussion of teacher preparation programs for junior college teachers:
(1) advanced work must be geared to teaching;
(2) work in psychology, sociology, etc, must accompany work in the content of English;
(3) programs must be flexible;
(4) junior college teachers must be involved in designing graduate programs;
(5) the wide spectrum of student ability in the junior and community college demands special teaching skills:
(6) internships in junior and community colleges provide the best kind of experience for prospective junior college teachers.

2. How can the wide variety of junior and community colleges be identified and described?
Communication among similar kinds of institutions is necessary.

3. How can teaching conditions and class loads be improved?
a. How can information on class loads, etc. be made readily accessible to junior college teachers and administrators?
b. What precedents exist for reducing loads?
c. What techniques other than strikes can help reduce teaching loads?
d. Can qualitative statements be made about the effect of a reduction in load?

4. How can articulation between junior and community colleges and four-year institutions be improved?
a. Transfer credit needs to be arranged.
b. Teachers need to be recruited.
c. Both must work together to build teacher preparation programs for college teachers of English.

5. What effect is unionization having on the professional life of the junior college English teacher?

6. What information is available on the proliferating remedial programs, including the suggested year of "pre-junior college"?

D. The Participants discussed the feasibility of a national conference on basic issues on the teaching of English in the junior college and recommended that the NCTE CCCC regional junior college committee discuss such a project. Lionel Sharp, Cazenovia, will submit a proposal for a junior college institute under the Education Professors Development Act for the summer of 1969.

E. The participants petitioned the MLA for a conference on the teaching of English in the junior colleges at the 1968 Annual Meeting.